NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 1-0249
ROD TURNBULL/KANSAS CITY FEBRUARY 26, 1976

MIDWINTER FARM MACHINERY SHOW

ANNCR:

WINTER ON THE FARM IS A TIME WHEN MOST OF THE HARD WORK OF THE WARM MONTHS IS A THING OF THE PAST -- AND THE FUTURE. IT IS A TIME WHEN THE FARMER CAN MAKE PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR'S PLANTING, CONSIDER PURCHASING NEW LIVESTOCK -- AND CONTEMPLATE NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN FARM MACHINERY, ESSENTIAL IN TODAY'S AGRICULTURE. FROM KANSAS CITY, AGRICULTURE SPECIALIST ROD TURNBULL SENDS THIS REPORT.

VOICE:

IN PROGRESS THIS WEEK IN KANSAS CITY WAS THE ANNUAL SHOW OF FARM MACHINERY. IT'S CALLED A TRADE SHOW, WITH MANUFACTURERS DISPLAYING THEIR MACHINES SO THAT FARMERS CAN LOOK THEM OVER -- NOT ONLY TO DECIDE WHETHER THEY WANT TO BUY, BUT ACTUALLY TO SEE THE NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN ALL EQUIPMENT USED IN FARMING.

TO THE AMERICAN FARMER, MACHINERY IS ALMOST AS NECESSARY AS LAND. BY ANY MEASURE, THE AVERAGE AMERICAN FARM IS A BIG FARM. THE INDIVIDUAL FARMER HOLDS AND FARMS A RATHER LARGE PIECE OF LAND, AND HE CAN DO THIS ONLY BECAUSE HE USES MACHINES TO DO VIRTUALLY ALL THE HEAVY WORK. MACHINES TAKE THE PLACE OF LABORERS. SO, EVEN THOUGH THE FARMS ARE BIG, THEY DO NOT EMPLOY MANY WORKERS. IT HELPS TO UNDERSTAND THE SIZE OF AMERICAN FARMS WHEN IT IS REALIZED THAT THE UNITED STATES IS A LARGE COUNTRY, WITH MORE THAN 200 MILLION PEOPLE, YET ONLY

FIVE PERCENT OF THE POPULATION IS ENGAGED IN FARMING. IMPORTANT, TOO, IS THE FACT THAT NEARLY ALL AMERICAN FARMS ARE OPERATED BY FAMILIES; THAT IS, A HUSBAND AND WIFE AND THEIR SONS AND DAUGHTERS. SO THEY ARE FAMILY FARMS EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE RELATIVELY LARGE ENTERPRISES. THIS HELPS EXPLAIN THE IMPORTANCE OF MACHINERY.

THE MACHINERY SHOW IN KANSAS CITY IS HELD IN TWO LARGE PAVILIONS USED EACH AUTUMN FOR A BIG LIVESTOCK SHOW. THE TWO BUILDINGS ARE COMPLETELY FILLED WITH MACHINES PRODUCED BY THREE HUNDRED DIFFERENT COMPANIES, AND THEY HAVE A TOTAL VALUE OF ABOUT FIFTEEN MILLION DOLLARS. BEFORE THE SHOW ENDED WEDNESDAY NIGHT, IT WAS EXPECTED THAT SIXTY THOUSAND FARMERS WOULD HAVE DRIVEN TO KANSAS CITY TO SEE THE DISPLAYS. THEY SPENT MOST OF EACH DAY JUST LOOKING OVER THIS HUGE DISPLAY OF MACHINERY, TALKING TO THE MANUFACTURERS' REPRESENTATIVES ABOUT THE CAPABILITIES OF EACH INSTRUMENT, COSTS OF OPERATION, AND, OF COURSE, THE COST OF THE MACHINE ITSELF.

IT'S ALL FREE, BECAUSE THE MANUFACTURERS ALL WANT THE FARMERS TO KNOW WHAT THEY HAVE TO OFFER. BUT NO SALES ARE MADE AT THE SHOW. AS THE FARMER LOOKS OVER THE NEW MACHINERY, NO SALESMAN TRIES TO GET HIM TO SIGN AN ORDER OR MAKE A PAYMENT. IN FACT, IF A FARMER DOES SEE A MACHINE HE WANTS TO BUY, HE MUST WAIT UNTIL HE RETURNS TO HIS HOME AND THEN CALL ON HIS LOCAL MACHINERY DEALER. THIS CUSTOM OF HAVING NO SALESMAN ON HAND MAKES IT CONVENIENT FOR THE FARMER NOT ONLY TO SEE THE MACHINERY PROVIDED BY ALL MANUFACTURERS, BUT TO COMPARE THEM --

ONE WITH THE OTHER -- AND TO DETERMINE WHAT HE THINKS WOULD BE BEST FOR HIM ON HIS OWN FARM.

AND THE MACHINES COME IN SIZES TO FIT EVERY JOB AND EVERY TYPE OF FARM. ONE COMPANY, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS TWENTY-FOUR DIFFERENT TRACTORS WHICH RANGE FROM LITTLE FELLOWS MADE FOR PULLING EQUIPMENT AROUND APPLE ORCHARDS TO HUGE MACHINES WHICH WILL PULL PLOWS THAT CAN TILL AS-MUCH AS FORTY HECTARES IN-ONE DAY. THERE IS A BIG VARIETY OF MACHINES ON DISPLAY -- ANYTHING FROM TRACTORS TO COMBINES FOR HARVESTING GRAIN; ALL KINDS OF TILLAGE TOOLS AND HAY TOOLS; MACHINES FOR LOADING AND UNLOADING GRAIN FROM BINS, LIVESTOCK FEEDERS; IRRIGATION EQUIPMENT AND EVEN MACHINES FOR DIGGING HOLES FOR FENCE POSTS. IT CANNOT BE OVEREMPHASIZED HOW INTERESTED THE AMERICAN FARMER IS IN ALL THIS MACHINERY, BECAUSE IT IS HIS WAY OF SAVING ON LABOR AND BEING AN EFFICIENT OPERATOR.

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